

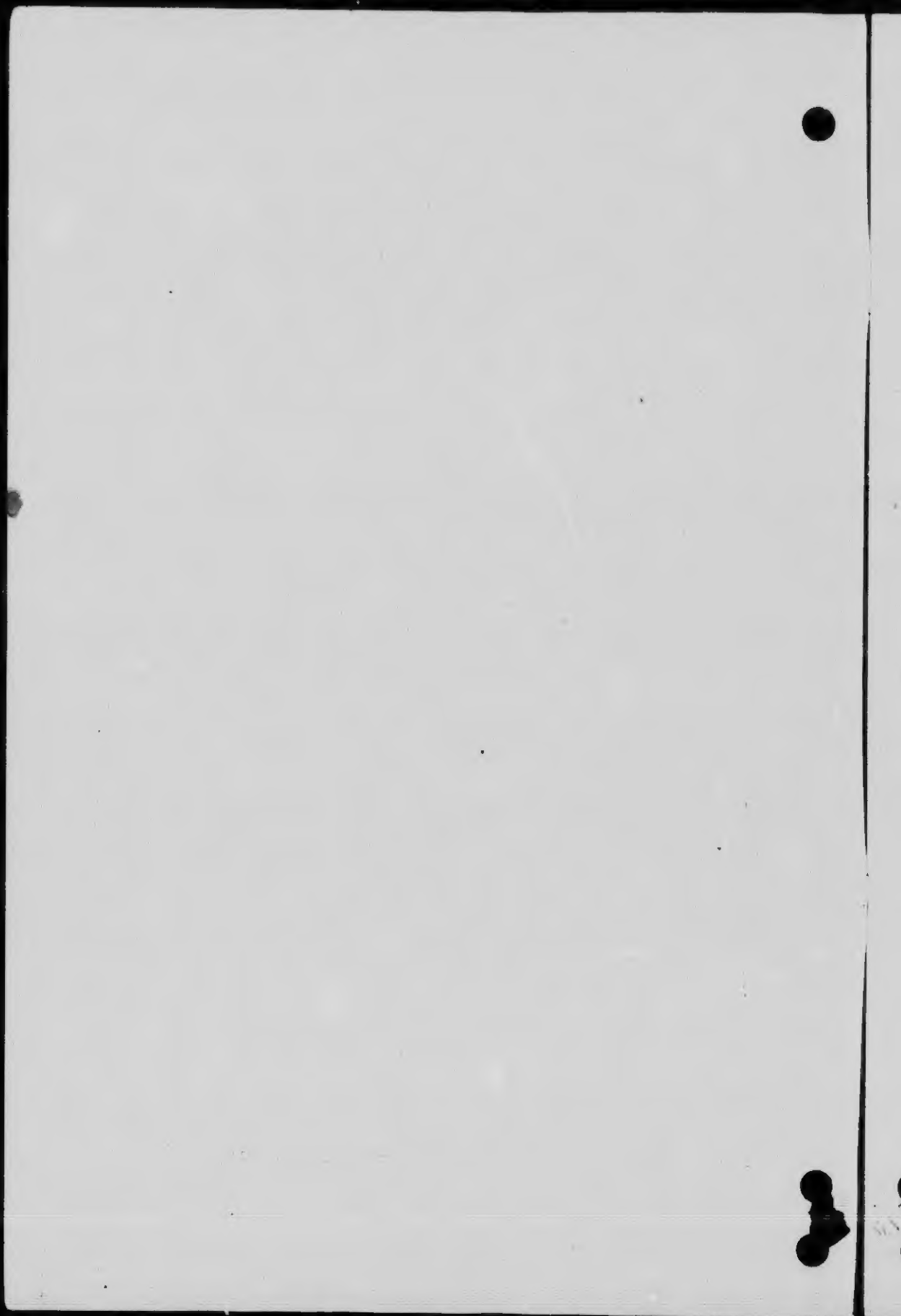
# THE SISTER PROFESSIONS



By  
THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM RENWICK  
RIDDELL, L.H.D., ETC.



Reprint from  
The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery,  
TORONTO, JULY, 1912



## THE SISTER PROFESSIONS

BY THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM BENWICK RIDDELL, L.H.D., ETC.,  
Justice, King's Bench Division, High Court of Justice, Ontario.

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—For your sakes I regret that the learned gentleman who was to reply to this toast on behalf of the Legal Profession has found it impossible to be here, and that, therefore, I have, almost at a moment's notice, been called upon to speak. My learned friend would have done justice to the subject such as I cannot expect to do. But on my own account I must say that I am glad, as I always consider it a very great privilege, to meet my brethren of the Ontario Medical Association (applause), and particularly upon occasions like the present, for I know that in addition to "the feast of reason and the flow of soul," the old prophecy will be fulfilled, and there will be "a feast of fat things (I have no reference to my friend Dr. King) (laughter), a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." No matter how philosophical a man may imagine he is growing with advancing years, he never—or hardly ever—grows out of a taste for a good dinner, well served amid congenial company (much laughter and applause).

I thank you for the kindly references to the profession I have the honor to represent—though one of His Majesty's Justices, I still claim to be a lawyer. I admit there might be difficulty in persuading my judicial brethren, and still more some of the members of the bar, of the justness of this claim; but then, you know, lawyers differ—like doctors (laughter).

At a meeting of another medical society some few months ago, in a little address, I ventured to draw a comparison between the two professions somewhat in the following manner.

The two professions have the same object in view, the good of the public. That in the performance of the duties cast upon them the members of the professions also benefit themselves is wholly proper and right. It is part of the eternal fitness of things that one doing good to another incidentally does good to himself. It is cast up as a reproach sometimes that lawyers practise for money. No one has yet disputed the maxim, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," and the members of these two learned professions do not stand alone. Does the merchant keep open his shop simply for the advantage of others?

\* Speech delivered at Banquet of the Ontario Medical Association, May, 1912.

the farmer plow and sow and reap just that his country may have more grain to export? Is the manufacturer wholly altruistic? And has not even the newspaper-man been known to charge thirty cents a line for his "reading notices"? It is said that when the child of a minister was asked whether his father was going to accept a call to a larger church with a larger salary, he answered, "Well, pa is still praying for guidance, but ma is packing up" (laughter). The noble examples in history and poetry do not in reality preach a contrary doctrine. Take that best known—"The chieftain to the Highlands bound," who cried

"Boatman, do not tarry;  
I will give you a silver pound  
To row me o'er the ferry,"

was told indeed by "that Highland wight,"

"I'll go, my chief, I'm ready;  
It is not for you, silver bright,  
But for your winsome lady."

But the poet, who was a Scotsman, and consequently, as Dr. Falconer will tell you, could not tell a lie, does not venture to say that that same Highland wight did not have in his sporran that very silver pound before the boat left the dock. If, false to his blood, he did omit this trifling formality, he was different from his countryman spoken of the other day in *Punch*. He said to the passengers upon his ferry-boat, when the storm became dangerous, "There's nae sayin' what may happen; sae Aw'll juist tak' yer fares noo" (laughter and applause).

Jesting aside, I have never, after nearly thirty years at the Bar and on the Bench, heard of an instance in which anyone having even an arguable case could not have it brought before the courts and pressed with all due skill. And it is unthinkable that a doctor would refuse his assistance to an injured person because he was not sure of his pay (applause). We have our little flings at each other—the lawyer talks of the doctor's failures lying six feet below the ground; the doctor counters by a reference to the lawyer's, six feet above. When the doctor laughs at the lawyer pumping up tears before a jury and charging \$100 a day for doing it—the lawyer retorts, "A trial is a major operation (laughter); how

many doctors will take less than \$100 for a major operation if there be more available! Pump up tears! What would anyone think of a doctor who would not pump up tears—or anything else—if it would or might help him to win out against the grim antagonist, Death?" (applause and laughter). Was it Huxley who compared the physician to a chess-player? The physician has opposite him an antagonist who must some day win the decisive game—that unseen player watches every move, he makes no haste, he plays fair, but while he makes no mistake himself, he inexorably exacts the full penalty for every mistake of the physician—and the physician does not know all the rules of the game.

The lawyer also plays a game; his antagonist is fallible as himself, but sometimes may fail to exact all the penalty to which he is entitled, and should know no more than his opponent of the rules of the game.

So I went on comparing the professions—but I notice that I was not asked to dine again by that society; and I think I shall not say anything more about my own profession, lest a worse thing befall me, and I be excluded from this Association as well (laughter).

Let me, with all due humility, say something about your profession—and this I do with your good at heart.

Highly as I regard the medical profession in Ontario, I am not at all satisfied with you—indeed, I may say I have no patience with you.

For one thing, you wholly neglect to dress properly—no one can tell a doctor from an undertaker except by the little black bag (laughter), and that does not differentiate him from a piano-tuner (laughter and applause). Why not go back to the old distinctive garb—the three-tailed wig, velvet coat with stiff skirts and large cuffs, buckled shoes and silk stockings (laughter)? And a cane, long and gold-headed—and with a hollow handle for carrying disinfectants—not stinking carbolic acid or iodoform, but rosemary of sweet scent and pungent camphor? Has not the College of Physicians in London even yet the identical gold cane carried successively by Radcliffe, Mead, Askew, Pitsairn, Baillie?

Now, could anything attract to the doctor more attention than such a garb, especially if he rode in a gilt carriage with two running footmen? (laughter).

You know, advertising always pays, whether it be of the grosser type adopted for Lydia Pinkham's splendid preparation and Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, or the more quiet and subtle form of the modest bulletin telling of the progress to the grave of some one much in the public eye (laughter and applause). No, I do not mean quite that! They sometimes do get better (continued laughter).

And, too, as Coleridge says, "He is the best physician who is the most ingenious inspirer of hope." How could anyone despair if such a lordly, such a gorgeous vision appeared by his bedside? (laughter).

Then, again, you do not bleed enough. (Let me not be misunderstood: I am referring to phlebotomy, not balantiotomy—bleeding produced by section of the vein, not of the purse—of your success in the latter I, of course, know nothing) (laughter). Now, I do not suggest that you should put pots of blood in your office window to advertise your art, as the barber-surgeons used to do, at least in London—but "it stands to reason" that bleeding is an excellent preventative of disease as well as a cure. In olden times, every gentleman and most ladies who were in good health and wished to remain in good health, were bled at least five times in the year, i.e., in September, before Advent, before Lent, after Easter and at Pentecost. This incidentally kept them posted on the feasts of the Church (laughter and applause). With a sick man, sick of anything, from falling sickness to *le mal de Naples*, bleed; v the first and, alas, often the last "intention."

Did not Dr. Lettsom, who was the president of the Philosophical Society of London, and whose practice brought him in £10,000 to £12,000 per annum—he lived toward the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century—himself say:

"When patients sick to me apply,  
I physics, bleeds and sweats 'em;  
If after that they choose to die,  
What's that to me?"

I. Lettsom." (laughter).

And then your outlandish medicines! You get iodine from seaweed, opium from poppies, quinine from Peruvian bark, and you neglect the medicines that lie at your very doors. For instance, the sovereign virtues of the human skull are almost

wholly unknown and never appealed to—a perfectly marvellous remedy in cases of epilepsy. Now, of course, all skulls are not of equal value—common sense tells us that; you will, of course, find the skull of one who has died a natural death good for little or nothing, because it stands to reason that the essential spirit has been dissipated or consumed by the disease; but if you want a first-rate article get the skull of one who has died a violent death—one hanged preferred. Then you will get an essential spirit for your life—and for your patients' (laughter and applause). You may either scrape the skull and administer the scrapings to the epileptic, or you may prepare an essence or spirit from it, and apply this. And such scrapings, essence or spirit are very useful in hemorrhage as well (laughter), and are a proved preventive against scrofula (laughter).

It is unfortunate—more than that, it is a shame—that the drug-stores no longer keep real Venice Treacle—*theriacum Venetianum*. Now, that splendid remedy was made of vipers, white wine and opium, spices, liquorice, red roses, tops of germander, juice of rough aloes, seeds of treacle mustard, tops of St. John's wort, and some twenty other herbs, mixed with honey into an electuary. It is not really the fault of the druggists—it is not prescribed now, and so it does not pay to keep it. Did the modern school of physician but know its many virtues it would be found in every drug-store, not to mention the department stores, Eaton's and Simpson's. One would naturally think that anyone would know that such an essentially nasty mixture must be good for most things, but since the spread of Hahnemann's infinitesimals, physicians seem to have lost the sense of the healing value of sheer nauseousness (laughter and applause).

And then drink! Why, you make men, grown men, drink water! You know what Sir Henry Maule said about water. A tipstaff approached him when a jury were out considering their verdict, and said, "Your Lordship, the jury would like a drink of water." The learned judge glared at him and said, "You have been sworn to keep the jury from meat and drink until they agree. Water is not meat; I don't call it drink: you may give them a pailful" (laughter). Now the physicians of the olden time knew better—they gave gallons of sack and other wines. When they had a wounded patient they took aristolochia, geranium, galingal and other herbs, mummy and



certain other drugs, and steeped them in wine (and lots of it), and gave that to the wounded man in bucketfuls. Why, you don't even use mummy!! (laughter and applause).

You seem, also, to have lost all sense of the great value of amulets and charms. Now, everyone knows that a live snail sewn up in a bag and worn round the neck is an excellent antidote for ague; the ordinary man on the street knows that a horse-chestnut in the left-hand trousers pocket will keep away rheumatism (laughter). Passing a child with the whooping cough under a donkey will generally cure; but if you want something absolutely certain, put a hairy worm or caterpillar into a flannel cover and that around the child's neck, and as the creature wastes away and dies, the whooping will depart. And surely that stands to reason! For is it not something like a hairy caterpillar which must be the cause of the tickling cough, and is it not certain that what hurts will also cure? Is there not a whole system of medicine erected upon the principle, *Similia similibus curantur*? and do we not all (excepting, of course, the President of the University and the Venerable the Archdeacon) in the morning after the night before take a hair of the dog that bit us? (Shouts of laughter.)

At the last dinner of medical men that I was privileged to attend, a magistrate was bemoaning the passing away of the old family physician, who came in and looked at your tongue, felt your pulse, shook his head, and then went out to the dining-room and took a drink with your father (laughter). I was foolish enough to rise and say, "Thank God for the disappearance of the greatest fraud in the world. Thousands of skeletons of young children are lying in the cemeteries which should be the frame of stalwart men and handsome women but for the ignorance and carelessness of the much-lauded old family physician, too lazy to keep up with the advance of his science, and too dishonest and greedy of gain to give way to those trained, or at least skilled in modern methods" (applause).

*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!* I now see the error of my ways. *Stare super vias antiquas* will hereafter be my motto—get back to the old practice and methods, shun innovation as a plague, and be not so conceited as to imagine that you know better than your fathers, in the good old times.

If anything I have said will help to bring you again to the true way, I shall be amply repaid (laughter and applause)."





